



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Announcement of Grant Application Deadlines and Funding Levels

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of funds availability

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), announces its Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program application window for fiscal year (FY) 2012. The FY 2012 funding for the Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program is \$3,000,000.

DATES: You may submit completed applications for grants on paper or electronically according to the following deadlines:

- Paper copies must carry proof of shipping no later than [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS FROM PUBLICATION] to be eligible for FY 2012 grant funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2012 grant funding.
- Electronic copies must be received by [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS FROM PUBLICATION] to be eligible for FY 2012 grant funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2012 grant funding.

ADDRESSES: You may obtain the application guide and materials for the Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program at the following sources:

- The Internet at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UTP_DTV.html

- 2. You may also request the application guide and materials from RUS by contacting the appropriate individual listed in Section VII of the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this notice.

Completed applications may be submitted the following ways:

- *Paper*: Submit completed paper applications for grants to the: Telecommunications Program, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Room 2844, STOP 1550, Washington, DC 20250–1550. Applications should be marked “Attention: Director, Advanced Services Division.”
- 2. *Electronic*: Submit electronic grant applications to Grants.gov at the following Web address: <http://www.grants.gov> / (Grants.gov), and follow the instructions you find on that Web site.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Petra Schultze, Financial Analyst, Advanced Services Division, Telecommunications Program, Rural Utilities Service, email: petra.schultze@wdc.usda.gov, telephone: 202–690–4493, fax: 202–720–1051. Additional point of contact: Norberto Esteves, Acting Director, Advanced Services Division at norberto.esteves@wdc.usda.gov or at same phone numbers listed previously.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Overview

Federal Agency: Rural Utilities Service (RUS).

Funding Opportunity Title: Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program.

Announcement Type: Initial announcement.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.861.

Dates: Deadline for completed grant applications submitted electronically or on paper.

Items in Supplementary Information

I. *Funding Opportunity:* Brief introduction to the Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program.

II. *Award Information:* Maximum amounts.

III. *Eligibility Information:* Who is eligible, what kinds of projects are eligible, what criteria determine basic eligibility.

IV. *Application and Submission Information:* Where to get application materials, what constitutes a completed application, how and where to submit applications, deadlines, items that are eligible.

V. *Application Review Information:* Considerations and preferences, scoring criteria, review standards, selection information.

VI. *Award Administration:* Award notice information, award recipient reporting requirements.

VII. *Agency Contacts:* Web, phone, fax, email, contact name.

I. Funding Opportunity

As part of the nation's transition to digital television, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) required all television broadcasters to have converted their transmitters to broadcast digital signals by June 12, 2009. While stations must broadcast their main transmitter signal in digital, many rural stations have yet to complete a full digital transition of their stations across all equipment. Rural stations often have translators serving small or isolated areas and some of these have not completed the transition to digital.

The 2009 FCC deadline did not apply to translators, and only recently in 2011 the FCC adopted a final deadline for analog-to-digital conversion of all translators by September 1, 2015. Because of this, translators have been allowed to continue broadcasting in analog, and stations are still in the process of converting some of their translators to digital. Some rural stations also have not fully converted their production and studio equipment to digital, which has impaired their ability to provide the same quality local programming that they provided in analog. The digital transition has also created some service gaps where households that received an analog signal are now unable to receive a digital signal. For rural households the digital transition has meant in some cases diminished over-the-air public television service. These rural households are the focus of the Agency's Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program.

Most applications to the Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program have sought assistance towards the goal of replicating analog coverage areas through transmitter and translator transitions. The first priority has been to initiate digital broadcasting from their main transmitters. As many stations have completed the digital transition of their transmitters, the focus has shifted to power upgrades and translators, as well as digital program production equipment and multicasting/data casting equipment. There are some rural stations that may need to install translators to provide fill-in service to areas that previously received analog but are now

unable to receive digital. In FY 2011, 15 awards were made, including the following project purposes: transmitter equipment, translators, studio and production equipment, master control equipment, and microwave equipment. When compared with the first few years of the program, as the digital transition progresses, more applications were received for translators and master control and production equipment, than for transmitters. Some stations may not have achieved full analog parity in program management and creation even after the June 12, 2009, deadline. Continuation of reliable public television service to all current patrons understandably is still the focus for many broadcasters.

It is important for public television stations to be able to tailor their programs and services (e.g., education services, public health, homeland security, and local culture) to the needs of their rural constituents. If public television programming is lost, many school systems may be left without educational programming they count on for curriculum compliance.

This notice has been formatted to conform to a policy directive issued by the Office of Federal Financial Management (OFFM) of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), published in the **Federal Register** on June 23, 2003, (68 FR 37370). This Notice does not change the Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program regulation (7 CFR part 1740).

II. Award Information

A. Available Funds for Grants

1. The amount available for grants for FY 2012 is \$3,000,000. The maximum amount for grants under this program is \$750,000 per public television station per year.

2. Assistance instrument: Grant documents appropriate to the project will be executed with successful applicants prior to any advance of funds.

B. Public Television Station Digital

Transition Grants Cannot be Renewed. Award documents specify the term of each award. The award term cannot be extended.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Who is eligible for grants? (See 7 CFR 1740.3.)

1. Public television stations which serve rural areas as defined in 7 CFR 1740.2, are eligible for Public Television Station Digital Transition Grants. A public television station is a noncommercial educational television broadcast station that is qualified for Community Service Grants by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting under section 396(k) of the Communications Act of 1934.

2. Individuals are not eligible for Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program financial assistance directly.

3. Corporations that have been convicted of a felony (or had an officer or agency acting on behalf of the corporation convicted of a felony) within the past 24 months are not eligible. Any corporation that has any unpaid federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, is not eligible

B. What are the basic eligibility requirements for a project?

1. Grants shall be made to perform digital transitions of television broadcasting serving rural areas. Grant funds may be used to acquire, lease, and/or install facilities and software necessary to the digital transition. Specific purposes include:

- a. Digital transmitters, translators, and repeaters, including all facilities required to initiate DTV broadcasting. All broadcast facilities acquired with grant funds shall be capable of delivering DTV programming and HDTV programming, at both the interim and final channel and power authorizations. There is no limit to the number of transmitters or translators that may be included in an application;
- b. Power upgrades of existing DTV transmitter equipment, including replacement of existing low-power digital transmitters with digital transmitters capable of delivering the final authorized power level;
- c. Studio-to-transmitter links;
- d. Equipment to allow local control over digital content and programming, including master control equipment;
- e. Digital program production equipment, including cameras, editing, mixing and storage equipment;
- f. Multicasting and data casting equipment;
- g. Cost of the lease of facilities, if any, for up to three years; and,
- h. Associated engineering and environmental studies necessary to implementation.

2. Matching contributions: There is no requirement for matching funds in this program (see 7 CFR 1740.5).

3. The following are not eligible for grant funding (see 7 CFR 1740.7):

a. Funding for ongoing operations or for facilities that will not be owned by the applicant, except for leased facilities as provided above;

b. Costs of salaries, wages, and employee benefits of public television station personnel unless they are for construction or installation of eligible facilities;

c. Facilities for which other grant funding from any other source has been approved;

d. Expenditures made prior to the application deadline specified in this Notice of Funds Availability.

C. Summary Discussion of a Completed Application

See paragraph IV.B of this notice for a summary discussion of the items that make up a completed application. You will find more complete information in the FY 2012 Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program Application Guide. You may also refer to 7 CFR 1740.9 for completed grant application items.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Where To Get Application Information

The application guide, copies of necessary forms and samples, and the Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program regulation are available from these sources:

1. The Internet: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UTP_DTV.html, or <http://www.grants.gov>.
2. The RUS Advanced Services Division, for paper copies of these materials call (202) 690–4493.

B. What constitutes a completed application?

1. Detailed information on each item required can be found in the Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program regulation and application guide. Applicants are strongly encouraged to read and apply both the regulation and the application guide. This Notice does not change the requirements for a completed application specified in the program regulation. The program regulation and application guide provide specific guidance on each of the items listed and the application guide provides all necessary forms and sample worksheets.

2. A completed application must include the following documentation, studies, reports and information in form satisfactory to RUS. Applications should be prepared in conformance with the provisions in 7 CFR part 1740, subpart A, and applicable USDA regulations including 7 CFR parts 3015, 3016, and 3019. Applicants must use the application guide for this program, which contains instructions and all necessary forms, as well as other important information, in preparing their application. Completed applications must include the following:

- a. An application for Federal assistance, Standard Form 424.
- b. An executive summary, not to exceed two pages, describing the public television station, its service area and offerings, its current digital transition status, and the proposed project.

c. Evidence of the applicant's eligibility to apply under this Notice, demonstrating that the applicant is a Public Television Station as defined in this Notice, and that it is required by the FCC to perform the digital transition.

d. A spreadsheet showing the total project cost, with a breakdown of items sufficient to enable RUS to determine individual item eligibility.

e. A coverage contour map showing the digital television coverage area of the application project. This map must show the counties (or county) comprising the Core Coverage Area by shading and by name. Partial counties included in the applicant's Core Coverage Area must be identified as partial and must contain an attachment with the applicant's estimate of the percentage that its coverage contour comprises of the total area of the county. (If the application is for a translator, the coverage area may be estimated by the applicant through computer modeling or some other reasonable method, and this estimate is subject to acceptance by RUS. (In the Application Guide, see Section C. 3 Project Core Coverage Area Map(s)).

f. The applicant's own calculation of its Rurality score, supported by a worksheet showing the population of its Core Coverage Area, and the urban and rural populations within the Core Coverage Area. The data source for the urban and rural components of that population must be identified. If the application includes computations made by a consultant or other organization outside the public television station, the application shall state the details of that collaboration. (In the Application Guide, see Section D. Scoring Documentation).

g. The applicant's own calculation of its Economic Need score, supported by a worksheet showing the National School Lunch Program eligibility levels for all school districts within the Core Coverage Area and averaging these eligibility percentages. The application must include a

statement from the state or local organization that administers the NSLP program certifying that the school district scores used in the computations are accurate. Applicants are to use the most recent data available. Some official NSLP data is posted on state and/or local government Web sites, in which case a printout of the data may be provided as long as it documents the Web site source. (In the Application Guide, see Section D. Scoring Documentation)

h. A presentation not to exceed five pages demonstrating the Critical Need for the project.

i. Evidence that the FCC has authorized the initiation of digital broadcasting at the project sites. In the event that an FCC construction permit has not been issued for one or more sites, RUS may include those sites in the grant, and make advance of funds for that site conditional upon the submission of a construction permit.

j. Compliance with other Federal statutes. The applicant must provide evidence or certification that it is in compliance with all applicable Federal statutes and regulations, including, but not limited to the following (Sample certifications are provided in the application guide.):

(i) Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination;

(ii) Architectural barriers;

(iii) Flood hazard area precautions;

(iv) Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970;

(v) Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1998 (41 U.S.C. 701);

(vi) Debarment, Suspension; and Other Responsibility Matters—Primary Covered Transactions;

(vii) Lobbying for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment (31 U.S.C. 1352).

k. Environmental impact and historic preservation. The applicant must provide details of the digital transition's impact on the environment and historic preservation, and comply with 7 CFR Part 1794, which contains the Agency's policies and procedures for implementing a variety of federal statutes, regulations, and executive orders generally pertaining to the protection of the quality of the human environment. This must be contained in a separate section entitled "Environmental Impact of the Digital Transition," and must include the Environmental Questionnaire/Certification, available from RUS, describing the impact of its digital transition. Submission of the Environmental Questionnaire/Certification alone does not constitute compliance with 7 CFR part 1794.

3. DUNS Number. As required by the OMB, all applicants for grants must supply a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when applying. The Standard Form 424 (SF-424) contains a field for you to use when supplying your DUNS number. Obtaining a DUNS number costs nothing and requires a short telephone call to Dun and Bradstreet. Please see http://www.grants.gov/applicants/request_duns_number.jsp for more information on how to obtain a DUNS number or how to verify your organization's number.

4. Central Contractor Registration (CCR).

a. In accordance with 2 CFR part 25 applicants, whether applying electronically or by paper, must be registered in the CCR prior to submitting an application. Applicants may register for the

CCR at <https://www.uscontractorregistration.com> /or by calling 1–877–252–2700. Completing the CCR registration process takes up to five business days, and applicants are strongly encouraged to begin the process well in advance of the deadline specified in this notice.

b. The CCR registration must remain active, with current information, at all times during which an entity has an application under consideration by an agency or has an active Federal Award.

To remain registered in the CCR database after the initial registration, the applicant is required to review and update, on an annual basis from the date of initial registration or subsequent updates, its information in the CCR database to ensure it is current, accurate and complete.

C. How many copies of an application are required?

1. Applications submitted on paper: Submit the original application and two (2) copies to RUS.

2. Electronically submitted applications: The additional paper copies for RUS are not necessary if you submit the application electronically through <http://www.grants.gov> .

D. How and where to submit an application?

Grant applications may be submitted on paper or electronically.

1. Submitting applications on paper.

a. Address paper applications for grants to the Telecommunications Program, RUS, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Room 2844, STOP 1550, Washington, DC 20250–1550. Applications should be marked “Attention: Director, Advanced Services Division.”

b. Paper applications must show proof of mailing or shipping consisting of one of the following:

- (i) A legibly dated postmark applied by the U. S. Postal Service;
- (ii) A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the USPS; or
- (iii) A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.

c. Non-USPS-applied postage dating, i.e. dated postage meter stamps, do not constitute proof of the date of mailing.

d. Due to screening procedures at the Department of Agriculture, packages arriving via the USPS are irradiated, which can damage the contents. RUS encourages applicants to consider the impact of this procedure in selecting their application delivery method.

2. Electronically Submitted Applications.

a. Applications will not be accepted via facsimile machine transmission or electronic mail.

b. Electronic applications for grants will be accepted if submitted through the Federal government's Grants.gov initiative at <http://www.grants.gov>.

c. How to use Grants.gov:

- (i) Navigate your Web browser to <http://www.grants.gov>.
- (ii) Follow the instructions on that Web site to find grant information.
- (iii) Download a copy of the application package.
- (iv) Complete the package off-line.

- (v) Upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov Web site.
- d. Grants.gov contains full instructions on all required passwords, credentialing and software.
- e. RUS encourages applicants who wish to apply through Grants.gov to submit their applications in advance of the deadline. Difficulties encountered by applicants filing through Grants.gov will not justify filing deadline extensions.
- f. If a system problem occurs or you have technical difficulties with an electronic application, please use the customer support resources available at the Grants.gov Web site.

E. Deadlines

1. Paper applications must be postmarked and mailed, shipped, or sent overnight no later than [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION] to be eligible for FY 2012 grant funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2012 grant funding.
2. Electronic grant applications must be received by [INSERT DATE: 60 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION] to be eligible for FY 2012 funding. Late applications are not eligible for FY 2012 grant funding.

V. Application Review Information

A. Criteria

1. Grant applications are scored competitively and subject to the criteria listed below.
2. Grant application scoring criteria are detailed in 7 CFR 1740.8. There are 100 points available, broken down as follows:

- a. The Rurality of the Project (up to 50 points);
- b. The Economic Need of the Project's Service Area (up to 25 points); and
- c. The Critical Need for the project, and of the applicant, including the benefits derived from the proposed service (up to 25 points).

B. Review Standards

1. All applications for grants must be delivered to RUS at the address and by the date specified in this notice to be eligible for funding. RUS will review each application for conformance with the provisions of this part. RUS may contact the applicant for additional information or clarification.
2. Incomplete applications as of the deadline for submission will not be considered. If an application is determined to be incomplete, the applicant will be notified in writing and the application will be returned and will not be considered for FY 2012 funding.
3. Applications conforming with this part will be evaluated competitively by a panel of RUS employees selected by the Administrator of RUS, and will be awarded points as described in the scoring criteria in 7 CFR 1740.8. Applications will be ranked and grants awarded in rank order until all grant funds are expended.
4. Regardless of the score an application receives, if the RUS determines that the Project is technically or financially infeasible, the Agency will notify the applicant, in writing, and the application will be returned and will not be considered for FY 2012 funding.

C. Scoring Guidelines

1. The applicant's calculated scores in Rurality and Economic Need will be checked and, if necessary, corrected by RUS.

2. The Critical Need score will be determined by RUS based on information presented in the application. The critical need score is a subjective score based on the reviewer's assessment of the supporting arguments made in the application. The score aims to assess how the specific digital transition purpose fits with the unique need of the television station as it moves all of its equipment through the digital transition. This score is intended to capture from the rural public's standpoint the necessity and usefulness of the proposed project. This scoring category will also recognize that at a specific time, some transition purposes are perceived to be more essential than others and that, over time, that perception changes. For example, during the transition from analog to digital transmitters, which concluded on June 12, 2009, a first time transition of a primary transmitter was the most essential project that could be undertaken for most stations and would have been scored accordingly. Now that all transmitters have completed the transition to digital, the focus may shift to some of the other eligible purposes such as translators, studio and production equipment, and master control equipment. But what equipment specifically is most essential may vary from station to station. Just to name one example, local production equipment can be a high priority especially if it produces an area's only local news or if the station has been historically active in producing local programming. In addition to being a subjective score, the critical need score is also relative in the sense that each application is scored in comparison to other applications in the competition. These various factors explain why a similar application may receive a different critical need score in different years of this program.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The Agency generally notifies applicants whose projects are selected for awards by faxing an award letter. The Agency follows the award *letter with a grant agreement that contains all the terms and conditions for the grant. A copy of the standard agreement is posted on the RUS Web site at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UTP_DTVResources.html*

An applicant must execute and return the grant agreement, accompanied by any additional items required by the grant agreement.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements. The items listed in the program regulation at 7 CFR 1740.9(j) implement the appropriate administrative and national policy requirements.

C. Reporting

1. All recipients of Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program financial assistance must provide semiannual performance activity reports to RUS until the project is complete and the funds are expended. A final performance report is also required; the final report may serve as the last semiannual report. The final report must include an evaluation of the success of the project.

2. Recipient and Subrecipient Reporting.

The applicant must have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements for first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 in the event the applicant receives funding unless such applicant is exempt from such reporting requirements pursuant to 2 CFR

part 170, §170.110(b). The reporting requirements under the Transparency Act pursuant to 2 CFR part 170 are as follows:

a. First Tier Sub-Awards of \$25,000 or more in non-Recovery Act funds (unless they are exempt under 2 CFR part 170) must be reported by the Recipient to <http://www.fsrs.gov> no later than the end of the month following the month the obligation was made.

b. The Total Compensation of the Recipient's Executives (5 most highly compensated executives) must be reported by the Recipient (if the Recipient meets the criteria under 2 CFR part 170) to <http://www.ccr.gov> by the end of the month following the month in which the award was made.

c. The Total Compensation of the Subrecipient's Executives (5 most highly compensated executives) must be reported by the Subrecipient (if the Subrecipient meets the criteria under 2 CFR part 170) to the Recipient by the end of the month following the month in which the sub-award was made.

3. Systems Necessary To Meet Reporting Requirements.

The applicant must have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements for first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 in the event the applicant receives funding unless such applicant is exempt from such reporting requirements pursuant to 2 CFR part 170, § 170.110(b).

VII. Agency Contacts

A. Web site: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/> . The Web site maintains up-to-date resources and contact information for the Public Television Station Digital Transition Grant Program.

B. Phone: 202–690–4493.

C. Fax: 202–720–1051.

D. Main points of contact: Petra Schultze, Financial Analyst, Advanced Services Division, Telecommunications Program, RUS, telephone: 202–690–4493, fax: 202–720–1051, or e-mail: petra.schultze@wdc.usda.gov. Additional point of contact at the same telephone number, or e-mail: norberto.esteves@wdc.usda.gov: Norberto Esteves, Acting Director, Advanced Services Division.

Dated: __April 12, 2012_____

Jonathan Adelstein

Administrator, Rural Utilities Service